Education Report

BRITISH COLUMBIA

BUS DRIVES HOME IMPORTANCE OF LITERACY

During a visit to the Qualicum school district last month, Minister Shirley Bond spent some time inside the Words on Wheels bus. The bus reaches isolated communities and promotes literacy for the whole family. Minister Bond also toured the Munchkinland Discovery Centre, which focuses on learning through play for babies and young children.

HOT TOPIC

Next year, B.C. will have the largest total education budget ever at $5.076 billion.

Media reports often talk about budget cuts within the Ministry of Education. The reality is that since 2000/01, annual operating funding for B.C. school districts has increased by $307 million to $4.027 billion. In 2006/07, operating funding is expected to increase by another $20 million to $4.047 billion.

Education funding is increasing, while overall student enrolment is decreasing. Since 2000/01, enrolment at B.C. public schools has decreased by 30,000 students. And enrolment is expected to drop by another 6,000 students per year over the next five years. By 2011, it is estimated there will be 60,000 fewer students in B.C. public schools than in 2000/01.

Increasing funding and decreasing enrolment mean more money for each student. Average total per-pupil funding has increased to $7,093 this year, an increase of $877 from 2000/01. The per-student grant is estimated at $7,198 for 2006/07, and it's expected to reach a record $7,338 in 2008/09.

Since 2000/01, B.C.'s total education budget has grown from $4.59 billion to $5.076 billion – the largest ever. And it will continue to grow to support student achievement. Balanced Budget 2006 provides an additional $112 million in funding for K-12 education. Combined with previously announced increases, that amounts to $437 million in new funding over the next three years.

These numbers show that the Ministry of Education is committed to continually improving B.C.'s education system for B.C.'s students.

BALANCED BUDGET 2006 HIGHLIGHTS

$421 million more over four years to improve services for children including:

- $112 million in additional funding for K-12 education
- $36 million to improve services for children with special needs
- $31 million for five regional Aboriginal child and family development authorities
- $17 million for computer training and access in First Nations communities
- $4 million to double the School Start-Up Supplement
- $2 million to combat the production and use of crystal methamphetamine

Message from Minister Shirley Bond

Premier Gordon Campbell and I have made an unprecedented commitment to public education in British Columbia: between us, we will visit every school district in the province over the coming months. These visits were announced in the annual Speech from the Throne – a demonstration of the importance our government puts on education. We understand that education is the key to the success of our communities and our province.

Honourable Shirley Bond
Minister of Education

I'm looking forward to meeting with educators, parents, trustees and students to hear their concerns about education and their ideas for how to make our world-class education system even better.

Earlier this week I met with our education partners in Howe Sound and West Vancouver. Last month, I had the great pleasure of visiting the Qualicum and Central Okanagan school districts. Everywhere I go I'm impressed with the creative and innovative programs and practices that are being developed by schools, districts and their community partners.

Premier Campbell and I want to share this knowledge with the whole province. By listening and learning at the community level, we can find ways to help all students in B.C. reach their full potential.

"Morning Song"
Written by Mary McKenna Siddals
Illustrated by Elizabeth Sayles

Reading Corner

What a wonderful way to wake up! The Prince George Public Library recommends "Morning Song," written by Prince George author Mary McKenna Siddals. Morning Song is about a young boy who wakes up slowly and wishes a good morning to everything he sees, spreading cheer as he goes. Beautifully illustrated by Elizabeth Sayles, Morning Song is bright, colourful and fun. The book is suitable for children aged 3 – 5.